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ROMAN BUSINESS LIFE AS SEEN IN HORACE

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The purpose of this paper is sufficiently indicated by its title. So far as I know, attention has not been called to the light thrown by Horace on Roman business life. One can hardly wonder at this, however, since the verses of a lyric poet—it is as a lyric poet that Horace is best known and has most impressed the world—constitute the last source to which one would naturally resort for information on so prosaic a subject as a nation's business and commercial life. Yet it is precisely in his lyrics that, in some respects at least, Horace is most suggestive in this connection.

On almost every page of Horace we have evidence that the intense commercial activity of his time had made a deep and abiding impression on his imagination. One thinks first here of the ever-recurring *mercator*, the merchant engaged in transmarine commerce and sailing the seas in his own ship.¹ The *mercator* is Horace's typical example of that kind of restless ambition which leads men to devote all their energies to the amassing of wealth. To this spirit of commercialism there are other allusions. *Epp.* i. 1. 53-69 may be summed up in a sentence: "the business world is money-mad, eager to heap up wealth by fair means or foul." See also *Epp.* i. 6. 31-35. In *Epp.* ii. 1. 103-10 Horace does indeed say that the old commercial instinct of the Romans is dead, but the tone of the passage (he is speaking ironically and extravagantly) proves that he is not to be taken at his word. *Serm.* i. 1 throughout testifies to the strength of the money-making passion and to the devotion to business which, in spite of all grumbling at individual lots, marked the world with which Horace was familiar. Commercial metaphors occasionally occur. In *C.* i. 3. 1-8 Vergil is spoken of as a *depositum*; the ship is a sort of bank-

¹ In *S.* i. 1. 6; *C.* i. 1. 15-18; i. 31. 9-15; iii. 24. 35-44; *Epp.* i. 1. 45, 46; i. 16. 69-72; *A. P.* 114 ff. he is mentioned by name. *C.* i. 35. 6-8; ii. 13. 13-16; ii. 16. 1-4; iii. 29. 57-61; iv. 6. 19; *Epod.* 17. 20, also contain allusions to him.

messenger charged with the duty of delivering Vergil safely on Grecian soil, as a messenger might be sent to deliver money or a certified check. In *C. i. 24. 11, 12* this figure recurs.

The enormous expansion of Roman commerce in the last two ante-Christian centuries was due largely to two causes, the wants of the people and the ever-increasing surrender of the Romans to the influence of oriental luxury. The wants of the greater portion of the populace were, to be sure, modest. From Cato *De agri cultura* 56-58 we learn that slaves working in the country received about four *modii* of wheat per month, a gallon and a half of wine per month on the average, some olives, figs, and salt (a *modius* per year).¹ City slaves perhaps received even less, since their work was less laborious. The diet of the free population of the cities consisted chiefly of bread (*frumentum*²) and vegetables (*holus*). In several places Horace mentions *holus* as a simple or poor man's diet. In *C. i. 31. 15, 16* the olives, the chicory, and the mallows are typical of the humble life of the contented poor, as sharply contrasted with the various forms of wealth for which the poet does not pray, 3-14.³

Yet, simple and frugal as were the wants of the major portion of the population of Rome, in the aggregate vast quantities of supplies of divers kinds were of necessity imported to supply those wants. Whence came the supplies of grain needed to feed Rome's vast population—a population which, it has been maintained, was not exceeded by that of any modern capital down to the beginning of the last century? To this question Horace returns a fairly complete answer, though, of course, we know the answer independently of any information conveyed by him. There was a time, no doubt, when Italy produced sufficient grain to meet all the needs of its own people.⁴

¹ Cf. also *S. i. 5. 68, 89*, and the editors there.

² Cf. the important part played by *frumentum* in Caesar's accounts of his campaigns: see, e. g., *B. C. i. 48; i. 52; iii. 47 ff.* See also *opsonium* in the lexicons.

³ *Epod. 2. 55-66*, though written of the country, throws light on the modest fare of many in the cities. For other references to *holus* see *S. i. 6. 111-15; ii. 7. 30 ff.; Epp. i. 5. 1, 2* (these passages refer to conditions in the city); cf. also *S. ii. 6. 60-67; ii. 2. 118-22; Epod. 2. 49-60*, which deal with life in the country. See Professor Smith's excellent note on *Epod. 2. 59*. Of general bearing is *Epp. i. 17. 13 ff.* One may say that wherever in Latin literature there is an allusion to simple living, mention is made of vegetables or of grain in some form.

⁴ See Tacitus *Ann. xii. 43*; Marquardt *Privatleben*², 397, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*², II. 111.

But that day had passed long before Horace was born. As the result of the policy whereby the government in times of scarcity of food-supplies imported grain and sold it at less than the market rates, much of the land in Italy could no longer be cultivated at a profit, at any rate if devoted to the raising of cereals. The death or ruin of small landholders through incessant wars, the buying-up of great tracts of land by speculators and the use of these lands, not in agriculture proper, but in the raising of cattle, horses, sheep, and goats, the increase in the number of slaves, which made possible the management of vast estates, all contributed to make Italy less and less self-sustaining. To these circumstances Horace alludes in *C. ii. 15*,¹ an ode believed by some to have been written at the suggestion of Augustus as part of the latter's attempt to stimulate anew devotion to husbandry.

Italy, then, was forced to rely mainly on outside lands for its food-supply, as Athens was in earlier times and as England is today. Grain came to Italy from Sicily, Sardinia, and Africa, especially Egypt.²

Among the necessities of life, even to the poor, we must reckon olives, olive oil, and honey. Olives were given even to the slaves. Beside its other uses, olive oil took the place of butter, and honey did duty for sugar. Olives Italy raised in abundance; in fact, in such quantities as to have some for export;³ the best came from Venafrum.⁴ Honey came in part from Italy, in part from abroad (from Mount Hymettus, near Athens).⁵

With the other cause that contributed largely to the expansion of Roman commerce—the spread of luxury—many passages in Horace are concerned. The keynote of his attitude here is struck in *C. ii. 15*; cf. especially vss. 10–16. In vss. 1–8 of *C. ii. 18*, an ode written in

¹ Cf. Lucan i. 167–70, with Haskins' note.

² Cf. *C. i. 31.1–4*; *i. 1.9, 10*; *iii. 16.30–32*; *S. ii. 3.87*. See also Marquardt *Staatsver.* II. 112–14; *Privatl.* 398; Lanciani *Ancient Rome* 241; Cicero *De lege Manilia*, § 34, and Wilkins' note; Kiessling on Horace *C. i. 1.9, 10*. That some grain was supplied by Italy goes without saying. We may prove it, if we care to, by *C. iii. 16.22–28*.

³ Mommsen, *History of Rome*, English translation, II. 445, 446.

⁴ *S. ii. 4.69*; *ii. 8.45*; *C. ii. 6.16*.

⁵ *C. ii. 6.14, 15*; *iii. 16.33*; *iv. 2.27*; *S. ii. 2.15*.

praise of *aurea mediocritas* and in condemnation of vainglorious ambition and ostentation, we have an instructive pen-picture of one of the palaces of Augustus' marble city. Its columns were cut in farthest Africa;¹ the roof-beams came from Hymettus; the *lacunaria* were adorned with ivory or gold, neither of which was produced in Italy.² The clients that thronged such a palace were robed in Spartan purple.³

Equally instructive are some of the items in the bill-of-fare in *Epod.* 2. 49 ff. On the tables of Rome's epicures were to be found oysters from Circeii;⁴ the *peloris* from the Lucrine Lake;⁵ the *murex* from Baiae,⁶ the *pecten* from Tarentum;⁷ *garum*, fish sauce made from the *piscis Iberi* (Spanish mackerel);⁸ the *echinus* from Misenum;⁹ pickled fish from Byzantium;¹⁰ saffron from Corycus in Cilicia (used as dressing);¹¹ boars from Umbria,¹² Laurentum,¹³ and Lucania;¹⁴ vinegar made from the wine of Methymna in Lesbos.¹⁵ Other luxurious dishes, all imported, though their provenience is not given by Horace, are the *scarus*,¹⁶ the *pavo*,¹⁷ and the *peregrina lagois*.¹⁸ We may mention also apples from Picenum¹⁹ and from Tibur,²⁰ and pears from Calabria.²¹

With fine feasts wines and perfumes were inseparably connected. Such phrases as *Assyria nardo*,²² *Achaemenium costum*,²³ *coronatus malobathro Syrio capillos*,²⁴ are suggestive. Two names of unguents, *malobathrum*²⁵ and *balanus*,²⁶ of themselves tell a story, being importations, as were the products to which they were applied. The names

¹ Cf. the allusions to Parian marble, *C.* i. 19. 6, and to Phrygian marble, *C.* iii. 1. 41.

² Cf. *ebur Indicum*, *C.* i. 31. 6.

³ In *C.* ii. 16. 35, 36 Grosphus wears *bis Afro murice tinctae lanae*; cf. *Epp.* ii. 2. 181 *vestes Gaetulo murice tinctae*. For purple (crimson) from Tyre or Sidon see *S.* ii. 4. 84; *Epp.* i. 10. 26. *Coae purpurae* are mentioned in *C.* iv. 13. 13.

⁴ *S.* ii. 4. 33.

¹² *S.* ii. 4. 40.

²⁰ *S.* ii. 4. 70.

⁵ *S.* ii. 4. 32.

¹³ *S.* ii. 4. 42.

²¹ *Epp.* i. 7. 14 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *S.* ii. 8. 6.

²² *C.* ii. 11. 6.

⁷ *S.* ii. 4. 34.

¹⁵ *S.* ii. 8. 50.

²³ *C.* iii. 1. 44.

⁸ *S.* ii. 8. 46.

¹⁶ *S.* ii. 2. 22.

²⁴ *C.* ii. 7. 7, 8.

⁹ *S.* ii. 4. 33.

¹⁷ *S.* ii. 2. 23.

²⁵ *C.* ii. 7. 8.

¹⁰ *S.* ii. 4. 66.

¹⁸ *S.* ii. 2. 22.

²⁶ *C.* iii. 29. 4.

¹¹ *S.* ii. 4. 68.

¹⁹ *S.* ii. 3. 272; ii. 4. 70.

of wines—Falernum,¹ Massicum,² Formianum,³ Caecubum,⁴ Surrentinum,⁵ Veientanum,⁶ Chium,⁷ Lesbium,⁸ Coum,⁹—all testify to trade, whether simply inland in Italy or transmarine.

Articles of luxury, such as ointments, jewelry, or wearing apparel, came to Rome from the East, passing often through the ports of Syria. This is the point of such phrases as *Syra . . . merce*,¹⁰ *Assyria nardo*,¹¹ *Tyriae merces*.¹²

These allusions create the impression of a vast volume of commercial dealings, energetically carried on with remote and widely sundered regions. This impression is greatly strengthened by the mention of *Bithyna carina*,¹³ *Thyna merx*,¹⁴ *Bithynia negotia*,¹⁵ *Cypriae merces*,¹⁶ Cyprian ships,¹⁷ *Cibyratice* (= *Phrygia*) *negotia*,¹⁸ Spanish iron (steel),¹⁹ iron (steel) from Noricum,²⁰ horses from Gaul,²¹ wool from Tarentum²² and Gallia Cisalpina,²³ fleeces dyed at Aquinum,²⁴ cloaks woven at Miletus,²⁵ *Campana supellex*,²⁶ and vases made at Allifae in Samnium.²⁷ One is inevitably reminded by this list of Pliny's description (*N. H.* iii. 54) of the Tiber as *rerum in toto orbe nascentium mercator placidissimus*. So in xi. 240 he calls Rome the place *ubi omnium gentium bona cominus iudicantur*.

Aside from banking operations (I include here the farming of the revenues), the main avenues to wealth in Horace's time were (1) transmarine commerce, (2) agriculture, especially the cultivation of the vine and the olive, and (3) the rearing of animals—cattle, sheep, goats, horses, etc. Horace at times mentions two, sometimes all three, of these together in this precise connection. *C.* i. 31. 1–15 will best repay study here. *Epp.* ii. 2. 177, 178 contains allusion to agriculture and the pasturing of animals as avenues to wealth; *C.* ii. 16. 33 ff.; ii. 3. 17; ii. 6. 10–12 dwell on the latter point.

¹ *C.* i. 27. 10; ii. 3. 8.

² *C.* i. 1. 19; ii. 7. 21.

³ *C.* i. 20. 11.

⁴ *C.* i. 37. 5; iii. 28. 3.

⁵ *S.* ii. 4. 55.

⁶ *S.* ii. 3. 143.

⁷ *Epod.* 9. 34; *S.* i. 10. 24.

⁸ *Epod.* 9. 34; *C.* i. 17. 21.

⁹ *S.* ii. 4. 29; ii. 8. 9.

¹⁰ *C.* i. 31. 12 (Smith's note).

¹¹ *C.* ii. 11. 16.

¹² *C.* iii. 29. 60.

¹³ *C.* i. 35. 7, 8.

¹⁴ *C.* iii. 7. 3.

¹⁵ *Epp.* i. 6. 31.

¹⁶ *C.* iii. 29. 60.

¹⁷ *C.* i. 1. 13.

¹⁸ *Epp.* i. 6. 33.

¹⁹ *C.* i. 29. 15.

²⁰ *C.* i. 16. 9; *Epod.* 17. 71.

²¹ *C.* i. 8. 6, 7.

²² *C.* ii. 6. 10, 11.

²³ *C.* iii. 16. 35, 36.

²⁴ *Epp.* i. 10. 27.

²⁵ *Epp.* i. 17. 30.

²⁶ *S.* i. 6. 118; ii. 3. 144.

²⁷ *S.* ii. 8. 39.

Viniculture is referred to in *C.* iii. 1. 9, 10; iii. 1. 25-32; in the latter passage it is coupled with transmarine commerce. In *C.* iii. 16. 25-36 honey-raising, agriculture, wine-growing, and the pasturing of cattle are the types of wealth-giving pursuits.¹

To banking proper there are but few allusions. Cf., however, the obscure passage in *S.* ii. 3. 69-71 and the editors there. In *S.* i. 2. 14-19 there is an allusion to interest, apparently at 60 per cent. per annum. In *S.* i. 3. 84-88 there is another reference to interest, with an allusion to the Kalends as a day for the settlement of loans or the payment of interest. *Ianus medius*² and *Ianus summus ab imo*³ plainly contain allusions to money transactions, though the exact suggestions conveyed by them to Horace's readers can no longer be determined. The commercial metaphors cited above (p. 111) come directly from the counting-room. To the *publicani* no reference is made, naturally enough. Their chief sphere of activity was the provinces; Horace's life, with the exception of a short period before and after Philippi, was spent in Rome and Italy.

In Horace's time the contract system was highly developed among the Romans. See *C.* ii. 18. 17, 18: *tu secunda marmora locas sub ipsum funus*; iii. 1. 34-37; *Epp.* i. 1. 77; ii. 2. 72.⁴

If we inquire into the details of business life, we find Horace animadverting upon the noise and bustle of Rome, which were due, no doubt, as with us, largely to business activity. In *C.* iii. 29. 11, 12 Horace bids Maecenas *omitte mirari beatae fumum et opes strepitumque Romae* (cf. *Aen.* i. 422). In *S.* i. 6. 42 the *plostra ducenta* are doubtless business carts. Cf. also *Epp.* i. 17. 7 *pulvis strepitusque rotarum*, and that most interesting passage, *Epp.* ii. 2. 72-86. Of the throngs that crowded the streets we get glimpses in *S.* i. 9. 77, 78; ii. 6. 28-39; *Epp.* ii. 2. 72-86. For peddlers in the streets, the subject so finely illustrated by Martial i. 41, see *Epp.* i. 7. 64 ff. The *institor* is twice mentioned, *Epod.* 17. 20; *C.* iii. 6. 30; in the former passage in close connection with *nautae*, in the latter in company with *navis Hispanae magister*.

¹ Other important passages bearing on this point are *Epod.* 1. 22-26; *C.* iii. 23. 5-8; iv. 5. 16-20; *Epod.* 4. 11-13.

² *S.* ii. 3. 18.

³ *Epp.* i. 1. 54.

⁴ See also Mommsen *op. cit.* II. 449 ff.; Marquardt *Privatl.* 399, 406; Gow *Companion to the School Classics* 178.

On particular lines of business Horace throws but little light in detail, save, perhaps, in the case of the book-trade. In *S. i. 4. 71, 72* we have

nulla taberna meos habeat neque pila libellos,
quis manus insudet volgi Hermogenisque Tigelli.

The exact meaning of *pila* is uncertain, but Overbeck's view,¹ that the reference is to the broad piers of brick-faced concrete that stand regularly on the right and the left of the shop fronts, both at Pompeii and in the hemicycle of Trajan's forum, seems to me the most sensible. The general sense then is "neither the inside nor the outside of any bookshop shall ever have my writings," etc. The passage shows that purchasers, real or pretending, were at liberty to enter the shops and examine the books, or to look over those exposed to view without the shop. The *pila* may have contained placards also, giving notices of books, prices, etc.; cf. Martial i. 117. In *Epp. i. 20. 1, 2* there is plain reference to a bookseller's row; a temple of Vertumnus seems to have stood in the Vicus Tuscus, which is known to have been a very busy street.² The brothers Sosii, mentioned in vs. 2, were publishers.³ From vss. 10-13 we learn that books which had lost their novelty for the Roman market were shipped to Africa or to Spain.

The Vicus Tuscus is elsewhere mentioned as the headquarters of perfumers and the dealers in table luxuries.⁴ In the Velabrum, which lay between the Palatine and the Tiber, provisions of all sorts were sold.⁵

Despite the Roman prattle about *fides Romana*, there were Romans who cheated in business. Cf. in general *Epp. i. 1. 65, 66*. For

¹ *Pompeii*⁴, p. 379.

² The point of *Ianum* (vs. 1) is less plain. Some think of a temple of Janus in the Argiletum, the "Printing House Square" of Rome, a street running out from the north side of the Forum Romanum. Richter (*Topographie der Stadt Rom* 107) thinks rather of an arch at the end of the Vicus Tuscus where it entered the Forum; to this view the *-que* in *Ianumque* perhaps lends support.

³ See Porphyryon *ad loc.* and cf. *Ars poetica* 345. See also Lanciani *Ancient Rome* 183.

⁴ *S. ii. 3. 226-30*. In *Epp. ii. 1. 259* there is a reference to "the street that sells incense and perfumes and pepper;" this is probably the Vicus Tuscus.

⁵ *S. ii. 3. 229*. Plautus *Captivi* 489 refers to the Velabrum as the home of "corners" in oil.

cheating tavern-keepers see *S.* i. 1. 29; i. 5. 3, 4. Rogues overreached their business partners: see *C.* iii. 24. 59–62. Adulterations and the like were not unknown: from *Epp.* i. 10. 26–29 it would seem that attempts were made to palm off garments steeped in inferior dyes for those treated with the genuine Tyrian color. Cf. further the very interesting passage, *Epp.* i. 16. 57–62, with its appeal to Laverna, the goddess of thieves!¹ In *S.* ii. 3. 25 a clever buyer of gardens and fine houses is dubbed *Mercurialis*, the idea apparently being that no man could honestly be so skilful, but must rather owe such extraordinary skill and fortune to some unholy compact with the gods.

We are ready now to draw some inferences from the array of facts presented in this paper. It is plain, as already stated, that Horace's mind had been profoundly impressed by the dimensions attained in his day by Roman trade and commerce. It is, of course, no small part of the value of his testimony that his allusions to the subject are incidental. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than the project of contributing to a knowledge of Roman business life. Probably he was himself unconscious of the extent to which his mind had been affected by the abounding mercantile life of his times. Again, he speaks with perfect knowledge of the thousand and one things named in his writings, whether they are luxurious materials used in the building and decoration of houses and palaces, or gorgeous fabrics used in wearing apparel, or dainties for the table. He draws contemporary Rome and Italy to the life.

Further, it is clear that much information—in fact, much more than is commonly suspected—concerning Roman trade and commerce can be gained from our various texts. One sometimes reads in respectable books by able writers that the chief source of information on this subject is the inscriptions. Whether this is true or not, the broad outlines can well be drawn from a study of the literary sources. For example, from a source so apparently unpromising at first blush as Cicero's invectives against Catiline, some interesting things can be learned. When Cicero tells the senate that Catiline met his accomplices for the last time *inter falcarios* (i. 8), he gives us

¹ For a splendid commentary on this passage cf. the prayer of the merchants to Mercury, Ovid *Fasti* v. 671–93.

a hint that at Rome, as with us, persons engaged in the same occupation displayed a tendency to congregate in particular quarters. In *illud signum collocandum consules illi locaverunt* (iii. 20), Cicero refers, quite incidentally, to the contract system.

Statements are sometimes made that commerce played but a small part in the economy of Roman life. Thus Pellison,¹ in a chapter dealing with the transaction of business in Pliny's time, says (p. 112):

Scanty as our information is, we are safe in assuming that commerce, in ancient Rome, never reached the same degree of activity as among modern nations. There was nothing at Rome which resembled even faintly the rush of business which sweeps along in its feverish movement the men of the present time. When we consider how practical the Romans were, we are inclined to feel much surprise that commerce among them held so unimportant a place, and we wonder how it could have been so dormant in an atmosphere which, at first thought, seems very favorable to its development.²

This passage contains a mixture of truth and falsehood. It is indeed true that "commerce, in ancient Rome, never reached the same degree of activity as among modern nations." But one all-sufficient explanation is the fact that the world was not as big then as it is now. Besides, the world's progress in various directions—I name but one, the use of steam—has added immensely to the growth of commerce. Yet it is not true, I believe, that commerce held an unimportant place among the Romans. Had commerce filled but a small place in contemporary Roman life, it would never have stamped itself so largely on the picture of that life as drawn by Horace. Abundant evidence could be adduced to support that of Horace. I have space but for one or two points. Who were the 80,000 Italians that were massacred by order of Mithradates? Largely persons interested directly or indirectly in Roman mercantile and banking operations in the provinces.³ Sallust⁴ declares that Cirta, a town in Africa, would have fallen into the hands of Jugurtha, had it not been

¹ *Roman Life in Pliny's Time*, by Maurice Pellison; translated from the French by Maud Wilkinson. The book is based on good authorities and is, in the main, instructive and reliable. Johnston *Private Life of the Romans*, p. 413, barely touches the subject, but his remarks are in the right spirit.

² Burn *Rome and the Campagna* 7, 8, writes in a similar vein.

³ Mommsen *op. cit.* III. 355.

⁴ *Bell. Iug.* 21. 2.

for the *multitudo togatorum*, the host, evidently, of Italians who had settled there for purposes of trade. This multitude *Numidas insequentis moenibus prohibuit*. According to Gibbins,¹ "Pliny, Varro, and Strabo mention that 120 vessels went yearly for Roman business to the delta of the Ganges." Pliny (*N. H.* vi. 96-101) describes various routes to India. In vi. 101 he says:

It will be worth while to set forth in detail the whole route to India, since now for the first time definite and precise information is available. The matter is one of consequence, since every year now India drains over \$2,000,000² from the coffers of our empire, and in return sends us back wares that are sold for a sum a hundred times as great.

A very large number of Roman coins has been found in India; indeed it has been held that a certain denarius, bearing the image of Augustus, was struck off for this trade only.

These are a few of the considerations which have led me to the conclusion that the volume of business and commerce in ancient Rome would compare favorably with that of any country in the world, prior to the development of ocean-going vessels propelled by steam and of the railroad. These conclusions, based wholly on literary passages, are amply confirmed by a single piece of monumental evidence, the well-known Monte Testaccio, the hillock close to the Tiber's bank, formed wholly of fragments of *amphorae* and other earthenware vessels broken in the ships that went to and fro from the neighboring docks to the uttermost parts of the earth.³

On one other point the passages cited from Horace seem to me to throw important light. This point is the attitude of the higher classes toward commerce and trade. On first thoughts one would be inclined to hold that on this point there is no room for doubt. We have, for instance, the familiar passage of Livy, xxi. 63. 3:

(C. Flaminius erat) invisus patribus ob novam legem quam Q. Claudius tribunus plebis adiuvante C. Flaminio tulerat, ne quis senator cuive senator

¹ *History of Commerce in Europe* 20.

² Fifty-six million sesterii, says Pliny.

³ All sorts of things, especially wine, oil, olives, and fruits, were transported in *amphorae*: hence the burden of ships was reckoned in terms of *amphorae* (cf. Livy xxi. 63. 3, cited below). In Plautus *Merc.* 74 ff. we have (*pater mihi dixit*) *agrum se vendidisse atque ea pecunia navem metretas quae trecentas tolleret parasse*.—On the Monte Testaccio see Richter *Topographie* 199.

pater fuisset maritimam navem quae plus quam trecentarum amphorarum esset haberet. Id satis habitum ad fructus ex agris vectandos; quaestus omnis patribus indecorus visus.

A closer examination, however, yields important results. One notices that the law was passed in defiance of the senate, and earned for Flaminius the hatred of that august body. We must infer, then, either that the senate did not agree with the supporters of the law that gainseeking occupations were unbecoming to senators, or, that—and this is more likely—some other motive was at the bottom of the law. Mommsen and Richter¹ find this motive in a desire to prevent the senators, who were the great landholders, from gaining a monopoly of the foreign trade also. Thus interpreted the passage is an indirect, but none the less important, testimony to the activity of Roman commercial operations at this time, about 218 B. C.; in either interpretation the passage shows that in reality, whatever their verbal attitude might be, senators were not averse to active participation in trade.

Next comes the long passage in Cicero *De officiis* i. 150, 151, in which all occupations, save agriculture and transmarine commerce, are unsparingly condemned. Transmarine commerce, indeed, receives but half-hearted commendation—nay, is damned with faint praise. In Cicero's opinion, as held for purposes of publication, the only respectable merchant is a retired merchant. Pliny the Younger, not to go too far afield, affects to feel the same contempt for trade. In i. 3. 3 he writes thus to Caninius Rufus: *Quin tu (tempus est enim) humiles et sordidas curas aliis mandas et ipse te in alto isto pinquique secessu studiis adseris?* The context shows that the *humiles et sordidae curae* are the cares imposed upon Rufus by his business interests. I said "Pliny affects to feel" designedly. One must make large deductions from any such utterances as this when it proceeds from the man who sought to study even while out hunting. Further, I am fully convinced (and one need go no farther than to Horace for the proof) that such expressions of contempt for trade are lip professions only, having no real place in the hearts of the writers. Pellison himself admits this, though the closing

¹ Mommsen *op. cit.* I. 270; W. Richter *Handel und Verkehr der wichtigsten Völker des Mittelmeeres im Altertum* 142.

words of the admission seem to me not entirely reconcilable with his opinion already quoted,¹ for he says (p. 114):

This contempt for commerce was probably sincere with some of the great nobles and literary men among the Romans. But it seems to us that it was more often a pretended contempt, assumed by those who wished to appear stylish and cultured. At bottom, the Romans, whom Pliny the Elder considered so devoted to utility, were mercantile in spirit.

I said above that I regard Horace's testimony as in itself amply sufficient to show that the better classes of Roman society did not, in their secret souls, honestly despise trade. I lay emphasis on Horace's testimony particularly because he was the court poet of the day, as well as a man most thoroughly in touch with contemporary life. In a well-known passage (*S. i. 10. 64-91*) he declares himself, in no uncertain terms, to be the poet of the few, those few including only the élite of the city. If those few in their secret souls had really entertained a disgust for trade and commerce, would Horace, the man who declared his primary, and indeed only, appeal to be to their judgment and to theirs alone—the man, further, of consummate tact—have suffered a thing distasteful to them to have occupied so large a place in his poetry?

¹ See p. 119.